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Meeting Notes – Hall of Waters Steering Committee

April 22, 2013

Attendees:

Bill Ahrens, Planning and Zoning Department Director
Chad Birdsong, Public Works Director
Ambrose Buckman, Mayor
Bob Gerdes, Creek Side Inn
David Haugland, City Manager
Brenda Hembrick, New Age Skincare Spa
Sonya Morgan, City Council, Historic Preservation Commission Representative
Larry Murry, Inspections Department Director
Katie Noyd, Parks and Recreation Director
Keith Winge, DEP
Dennis Hartman
Kevin Snedden, Elms Hotel & Spa
Eric Busich, Elms Hotel & Spa
April Graham, Elms Hotel & Spa
Susan Richards Johnson, SRJA
Julie Garvey, SRJA

Hall of Waters Building Tour

- Before the Steering Committee Meeting a group of committee members gathered in the Water Bar for a tour of the Hall of Waters Facility.
 - The tour was led by Larry Murry and Sonya Morgan.
 - All floors from the Basement through the Roof were toured.
 - The intent was to show the committee members the current conditions of the building and to help the group visualize potential areas for adaptive re-use and rehabilitation.

Agenda and Discussions

- Introductions were made.
- A Sign-in Sheet was passed around.
- A review of the previous meeting outcomes were discussed and Sonya Morgan introduced the Hall of Waters Adaptive Reuse Questionnaire Outcomes collected from the online survey that was posted on the City's website.
 - Sonya Morgan presented the results in a handout which was distributed to the group.



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- There were a total of 88 respondents. The most popular potential adaptive re-use options from the list of options to choose from were: Pool Area as Recreation Area, Health Tourism with New Spa Facility, Community Activities and Meeting Areas and Tourism History opportunity.
- The survey also had a section for people to write in their own comments. A good percentage were interested in restoring the facility, the natural spring waters and a potential connection/relationship with the Elms Hotel.
- Other ideas for alternative uses included:
 - Visitor's Center
 - City Offices including Chamber of Commerce
 - Mineral Water Bar
 - Re-open the Spa
 - Business incubator/Arts Walk
 - Re-open bottling of the waters at the Hall
 - Senior Exercise Area
 - It was discussed that the pool should not be reopened because the City is planning to build a new community center and thus will have a pool. Services available in the new community center should not be duplicated at the Hall of Waters.
 - Reopening the pool is also extremely cost prohibitive. A study was done 4 to 5 years ago which estimated the cost for reopening the pool (restoration and new equipment) at \$3 million.
- The City is proposing to build a new community center so it will be important not to duplicate services in the Hall of Waters that the community center will have.
- The group discussed the current conditions of the building and some items that are of concern to the group in order to improve the functionality of the structure:
 - The roof was worked when the spa was still functioning in the building. Minor repairs have been made throughout the years.
 - The HVAC units have been maintained yearly and were replaced on the west side of the structure 5 years ago.
 - The Hall of Springs has a southern and western exposure to the sun and thus would benefit from motorized/programmable sun shades on the interior of the building. This would help with the afternoon sun glare and the cooling of the space.
 - The Hall of Springs at night is very dimly lit and is difficult to have evening/night events and thus would benefit from the addition of lighting. This lighting should not detract from the historic overhead light fixtures and would be best if they could be dimmable and programmable to create different scenes of light levels to match the function in the space.
 - Good lighting will also be key if the pool area is to be utilized for events.



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- The Water Bar within the Hall of Springs no longer has bottled or tap spring water for visitors and is in need of metal, wood and tile restoration. The fountain at the south end of the bar also needs restoration as it leaks.
 - Electrical connections/breakers and telephone/data communications connections have been moved up to the Ground Mezzanine after the lower levels have been flooded in the past. These should be further evaluated and updated when the building is rehabilitated.
 - The building only has 1 water fountain and is located on the Ground Mezzanine level.
 - The tower and metal flue are in poor condition and are a high priority for stabilization and rehabilitation.
 - The flood water situation needs to be addressed around the building and from within. There are some upgrades to the storm water control system and sump pumps that can be done independent from the Army Corps of Engineers which typically oversee the major improvements to the creek.
 - A generator should be considered when performing the necessary flood/sump pump upgrades as this can keep the pumps running during power outages.
 - The City's natural gas bills are very high using the old system in place. Only one boiler is currently operational. These systems have been evaluated as a part of the study and will be priced separately from the project as work needs to proceed soon, preferably before the winter. The study outlines roughly how the building is to be zoned and that certain floors/areas will be treated differently based upon the Preservation Treatment Zone and use.
 - The basement is not a finished space and likely should remain open as it is and not utilized for storage.
- From the historic research uncovered through the Excelsior Springs Historical Museum & Archives, there has been at least one major flood event per decade since the building was built.
 - The flooding has repeatedly caused major damage to the building and its function as a pool facility.
 - The Army Corps of Engineers have in the past dredged the Fishing River, built flood walls and created spillways for overflow rainwater. These efforts have helped to alleviate some of the flooding but have not been able to completely protect the Hall of Waters and the Downtown from major flash flooding events.
 - The City does have flood insurance.
 - Dennis from the committee has photos of the pool with the original wood floor over it when a sporting event was going on.
 - A committee in Excelsior Springs has proposed a fountain in the North Terrace in front of the building.
 - The North Terrace is within a high preservation zone so should something like this move forward in the future, it will need to be thoroughly studied.



- Other ideas for alternate uses were discussed:
 - Heritage Tourism
 - History of the hall of Waters Guided Tours for a fee
 - 'Mineral Water' flight (a tasting of several waters)
 - Event Space - with partnership with The Elms Hotel & Spa
 - Will need prep-catering kitchen to support the vent space
 - Occupancy will depend on building code review and evaluation of the available space.
 - Two spaces for potential events are the Hall of Springs and if the pool was covered with a flooring system on the Ground Floor.
 - Potentially the pool area could have space for 100 seated or 200 standing.
 - SRJA to verify with building code and confirm within the final report.
 - National Healing Arts Museum
 - There is a potential source for the museum collection from a private donor who is looking for a place to display and archive the artifacts.
 - Micro-Brewery – Income generating business which rents out a floor or several floors for making beer using natural mineral water.
 - Would need a tasting room and potentially could even have a restaurant or connection with the catering kitchen for large events
- The Hall of Waters facility represents over 50,000 square feet of space, which currently only houses between 9-13 City employees.
 - It was discussed that a scheme might be developed which relocates all City employees to one floor. (first floor)
 - IT was discussed that potentially Community Development Department would move into the Public Works facility.
- If the building is utilized partially as a historic spa again the Elms Hotel would encourage this use and believe that the added variety of spa services and experience will only help to reestablish Excelsior Springs as a spa destination.
 - The previous spa owners who leased the space located on the first floor were contacted about their experience.
 - The new spa would be managed by a private company who would lease the space from the City.
 - Options for the historic spa include traditional hydrotherapy treatments with the natural spring waters.
 - It was noted that very few places in the world have natural spring water therapies.
 - ISPA (International Spa Association) could be a good resource for research.



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- IF the waters are not available to be piped into the Hall, there are spas that use man-made mineral tablets to the water baths to make them mineral waters (Grove Park Inn).
 - The polio pool was discussed as an option for full immersion mineral water treatments such as aqua massage (watsu?) and other hydrotherapy treatments
 - Other treatments could include: Chiropractic, Massage and Acupuncture.
- There is a strong interest in restoring the spring waters into the Hall of Springs. This would include the Siloam Spring water (Iron Manganese) which is currently located under the North Terrace, as well as piping in adjacent springs. At one time, there were perhaps as many as 10 types of spring water pumped into the Hall of Springs water bar.
 - There is a belief by many tourists that the water bar still dispenses these many types of water. The last bottle of Excelsior Springs Mineral Water was sold by the Water Bar.
 - Other waters which are believed to be located near the Hall of Waters include: Calcium, White Sulfur (which used to fill the pool), manganese, Lithia, among others.
 - While the exploration of the potential local springs is not a part of this report, it would prove useful to have a separate study by an experienced contractor to investigate this potential.
 - This study might explore several individual wells; the yield of the specific wells, the safety of the water and its dispensing at the Hall of Springs water bar, as well as on-site bottling opportunities.
 - It was thought that there may be a couple local companies that could perform the sampling, lower a camera into the well to view the inside and perform a capacity study of the water.
 - The MO DNR also needs to be contacted about the viability of the waters should they test ok for human consumption/bathing and what the Water Conservation District encompasses.
 - Spring water availability would be important for any future spa vendor in the building, in order to market mineral baths.
 - The City discussed a study that was completed on a local Ameren property that restricts ground water use for a certain distance from the site. This HOW may be within this zone. This information should be shared with the contractor who prepared the Phase I report, in order to be included within their findings and recommendations.
 - Meeting concluded with the intent that after a decision was made about the availability of the waters, the committee would meet one last time to review the proposed plans for redevelopment/rehabilitation at a date to be determined.